

REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP AT NORTHERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

A DECADE OF ENGAGING WITH OUR REGION

The VVV Process and Resulting Products

Engaging our region in setting university priorities has been an NKU tradition for nearly a decade. It began in the fall of 1997 with President James C. Votruba's *Vision, Voices and Values* (VVV) process, during which he and a team of NKU faculty, administrators, and staff met with more than 30 groups comprised of more than 500 campus and community leaders in order to seek their views on the future directions of NKU. About half of the groups were internal to NKU; the other half were external and included business, education, government, and community leaders in the Northern Kentucky region. What was learned in those meetings shaped the university's vision and core values. It also resulted in a set of strategic priorities that guided the university for 5 years.

NKU's vision, developed from the messages heard in the VVV process, acknowledges the university's integral role in the community. The vision states:

Northern Kentucky University will become a preeminent, learner-centered, metropolitan university recognized for its contributions to the intellectual, social, economic, cultural, and civic vitality of its region and that of the Commonwealth.

Similarly one of the university's eight core values, emerging from the VVV process, highlights the university's commitment to regional stewardship. The value, *Public Engagement*, states:

We are committed to treating the metropolitan region as an extension of our campus. We will build partnerships throughout the region that both serve the learning needs of the public and enhance the learning opportunities available to our faculty, staff, and students.

Two other core values also refer to the university's strong commitment to the region. The value *Multiculturalism* states:

We are committed to advancing multicultural understanding within both the University and the community as an educational and civic priority.

Collegiality and Collaboration states:

We are committed to building a University community characterized by open communication and shared responsibility for decisions. We will build a culture of collegiality and collaboration within and between the University and the public we serve.

In the fall of 2002, the university embarked on a second VVV process, this time involving more than 550 people from throughout the campus and the metropolitan region. The conversations focused on assessing the university's progress in the eyes of its various constituencies and

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developing the strategic priorities for the next 5 years. From those conversations, the university learned that:

Community groups strongly supported the University's current commitment to public engagement and urged us to do more of it, including: enhancing our involvement with P-12 education, increasing collaborations concerning economic development, providing more support for local governments and nonprofit organizations, and providing a neutral platform for addressing the critical challenges that confront our region.

The two strategic agendas that grew out of the two VVV processes commit NKU to being a good regional steward. The current agenda includes a priority to *Strengthen Public Engagement* and commits specifically to work with four sectors:

P-12 education, regional economic development, local governments and local communities, and the local nonprofit community.

It also commits NKU to:

sponsor programs and encourage public dialogue to address the critical and sometimes controversial issues facing our community, our nation, and our world; expand access to the visual and performing arts, particularly in those communities that have limited access to the arts; and strengthen our communication with our various publics through an improved Web presence.

[See Appendix A for a copy of *Strengthening Our Capacity to Serve*, the university's 2003-2008 strategic agenda. It includes the university's vision, core values, and current strategic priorities.]

Making Place Matter

Based on a competitive proposal submitted to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), NKU was selected as one of four universities to participate in ***Making Place Matter*** (MPM) a collaborative project of AASCU, the Alliance for Regional Stewardship (ARS), and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS). MPM was partially funded by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

MPM was a 2-year project based on the belief that state colleges and universities should be regional stewards and provide leadership that contributes to the long-term well-being of their regions. Its purpose was to develop and test tools and models that universities could use to work collaboratively with their regional and statewide partners to evaluate and improve their stewardship efforts. The four national demonstration sites were chosen to conduct 18-month pilot tests using a stewardship audit and a series of guided discussions with their community and regional stakeholders. In these discussions, they were to identify their regions' stewardship opportunities and barriers and then develop plans to overcome the barriers and realize the opportunities. NKU's selection for the project recognized the university's past accomplishments and commitment to regional stewardship.

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NKU's MPM process began in August 2004 with a half-day gathering of almost three dozen internal and external stakeholders meeting with consultants from AASCU, ARS, and NCHEMS. [See Appendix B for a listing of members of the stakeholders group.] A subsequent series of stakeholder meetings and other meetings of smaller Action Teams led to the identification of four priorities, or stewardship opportunities: education/human capital development, innovation/economic development, diversity/inclusion, and regional leadership/governance.

With approval from AASCU, ARS, and NCHEMS, NKU modified its MPM process to accommodate *Vision 2015*, a regional visioning process that significantly overlapped with the goals of MPM. Although MPM was already well on its way when Vision 2015 emerged, the university, with input from several people on the stakeholders' group, decided it was in everyone's best interests – the community's, the university's, and the members of the MPM stakeholder group – to combine the two projects and suspend meetings of the full MPM stakeholders' group. Thus all of the externally-focused portions of the MPM process, including the work of the Action Teams, were folded into Vision 2015's Action Teams where they continued to address the region's desired outcomes, measurable objectives, and appropriate action steps to achieve them.

Vision 2015

In 2005, a group of regional leaders agreed that much had changed since 1995 when Northern Kentucky's leaders created a 25-year vision for the region, and they concluded that the region needed an updated roadmap. They asked President James C. Votruba and A. J. Schaeffer, an attorney and member of Legacy – the region's organization for young professionals – to co-chair the new regional visioning process. About two dozen NKU faculty and staff participated in the process, along with hundreds of business, education, and government leaders and hundreds of "ordinary" citizens from high school age through senior citizens.

NKU provided at least one content expert – a faculty member or administrator – to serve as a resource and data analyst/interpreter for each of Vision 2015's five Action Teams. Because of the university's extensive participation, NKU had one or more representatives present at every meeting of the Steering Committee, the Leadership Team, and each of the five Action Teams. This endeavor, with President Votruba as co-chair, was clearly a collaborative effort between the university and the community.

Vision 2015 resulted in a final report containing six strategic directions, each encompassing a series of specific goals, many of which relate to activities and actions that can best be undertaken by NKU in collaboration with community partners. The Vision 2015 report will guide the university's role as a regional steward over the next decade. [See Appendix C for a copy of the Vision 2015 Summary Report.]

EVIDENCE OF EXISTING ALIGNMENT FOR REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP

There are so many ways in which NKU is aligned to support regional stewardship that it is not practical to describe them all here. A few of the more striking examples will be provided.

SHAPE

When the regional focus of *Making Place Matter* shifted to Vision 2015, NKU's internal stakeholders were asked to change their focus, to assess how well the university was internally aligned for its regional stewardship role and to pinpoint areas that could be improved. This led to a new committee of nine faculty and five administrators who began meeting at the start of the fall semester, 2005. Called SHAPE (Strategically Helping Align for Public Engagement), the committee was chaired by the Associate Provost for Outreach and met almost weekly throughout the 05-06 academic year.

SHAPE organized its analysis around an Institutional Alignment Grid. [See Appendix D for a copy of the grid.] One axis lists 14 elements of alignment that influence how much and what types of engagement actually occur. The elements range from mission statements to individual incentives to public policies. The other axis lists administrative levels, from individual faculty and staff members, to departments, colleges, and ultimately the university level. Within each cell, the policies, procedures, and/or special initiatives that ought to be in place at that administrative level, regarding that particular element were entered, and then an informal assessment determined whether NKU was or was not satisfactorily aligned in each cell of the grid. Where alignment was deficient, strategies were developed by SHAPE to enhance the alignment. As the last step in the analysis, a time line was created for implementing the strategies. These materials – the alignment grid and the time line – were shared with the Deans, Provost, and President and are serving as a roadmap for the work of the Associate Provost for Outreach. With guidance from SHAPE, the Associate Provost is working to implement the strategies in the plan. [See Appendix E for a slightly abridged and simplified version of the completed grid.]

On January 18, 2006, SHAPE sponsored an event for all faculty and senior administrators. Titled *Aligning for Public Engagement: Laying the Foundation*, it attracted a large number of faculty and director-level staff who were given a new university publication with white papers from the President and Provost, definitions of relevant outreach and public engagement terms, and profiles of selected faculty involved in outreach and public engagement. The event featured an outside speaker – Bill Plater, Executive Vice Chancellor and Dean of the Faculties at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis – who was followed by a Q&A session and a reception for the attendees to continue their discussions. [See Appendix F for a copy of the publication that was distributed.]

On August 25, SHAPE is sponsoring an event that involves poster presentations of selected public engagement activities. Faculty and administrators will be encouraged to “mix and mingle” as they engage in informal conversation about outreach and public engagement.

Mission, Vision, and Goals

As stated earlier, regional stewardship features prominently in the university's vision statement, as well as in its core values and strategic priorities. It must also feature prominently in the mission, vision, and goals of each college and each department. The Provost has been working with the Deans to ensure this is the case, and she expects each college and each academic department to reflect public engagement in their mission, vision, and goals by the end of fall semester, 2006.

Reappointment, Promotion and Tenure

National and regional discussions about regional stewardship inevitably lead to conversations about incentives, and that inevitably results in discussions of reappointment, promotion, and tenure (RPT) guidelines. In the national discussions, administrators generally bemoan the difficulty they have in convincing faculty governing bodies to give public engagement a strong and visible place in their university's RPT policies. NKU, on the other hand, is able to report that its Faculty Senate developed and approved a new set of RPT guidelines that provides a much stronger and overt role for public engagement. The Senate's policies were approved by the administration and the university's Board of Regents in the spring of 2006.

Budget

An institution's budget is a clear reflection of its priorities. At NKU, the budget process requires that internal requests for additional money address if/how the request relates to the university's regional stewardship mission. Over the last 5 years, this process has resulted in increasing amounts of money allocated to regional stewardship.

The university now invests nearly \$7 million annually in those units whose mission is outreach and public engagement. [See Appendix G for a list of those units and their staffing levels.] However, this is only a portion of the university's total investment in regional stewardship because the work pervades the campus. Much of it is undertaken by faculty who elect to do this work as a regular part of their faculty assignment or as a special reassignment, and much of it is supported by operating budgets of units whose mission is far, far broader than regional stewardship.

Recruiting

In order to ensure that NKU hires faculty who will eagerly engage in outreach and public engagement, the university has a policy that all advertising for faculty positions must contain a statement that reflects the university's commitment to regional stewardship. The ad must state:

[NKU] is a nationally recognized metropolitan university committed to active engagement with the Northern Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati region of nearly two million people. Our institution is built on core values that emphasize multidimensional excellence, learner-centered education, access across the lifespan, civic engagement, diversity and multiculturalism, innovation, collegiality, and collaboration across disciplines and professional fields. NKU is

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committed to recruiting and retaining faculty members who have both the interest and ability to work across the full breadth of the University's teaching, research, and public engagement mission.

In the coming months, the university will be discussing the inclusion of similar wording in advertisements for administrative positions.

University Publications

The publications of a university that is strategically aligned to support public engagement should reflect its commitment to regional stewardship, and that is, in fact, the case at NKU. For 4 years, the university has been publishing an annual magazine titled *Engaging With Our Region*, which is distributed to the region's community, business, education and nonprofit leaders, and to university donors. It is also sent to members of the Kentucky General Assembly. [See Appendix H for a copy of the magazine.]

NKU also publishes an Annual Report of Outreach and Public Engagement that reviews the year's public engagement accomplishments; provides annual reports from the university's centers and institutes that have strong public engagement missions; and shares the results from the university's annual survey of faculty and staff involvement in outreach and public engagement. The survey itself, which has been conducted for 4 years is another way in which NKU is aligned to support regional stewardship. [See Appendix I for a copy of the Annual Report.]

Three times a year, NKU issues *Community Connections*, a catalog of all NKU-sponsored activities that are open to the public. This publication, in its third year, is distributed to 35,000 people and encourages them to take advantage of the many opportunities that NKU provides for the community. [See Appendix J for a copy of Community Connections.] There is also an online version of *Community Connections* that is updated daily and an e-mail version that lists events and activities for P-12 students and teachers. The e-mail version is sent to teachers in the university's service area.

NKU at a Glance, a shirt-pocket sized publication that reports the statistical highlights of the university (e.g., enrollment, degrees conferred, size of physical plant, number of faculty, etc.), now includes a section that presents summary data from NKU's annual survey of outreach and public engagement.

Awards and Recognitions

At the request of the Provost, a faculty committee held meetings over a series of months in order to develop an annual awards program to recognize outstanding faculty achievements in teaching, research, and public engagement. Their plan recommends two awards in each of the three categories: one award will recognize a faculty member for his/her outstanding single accomplishment completed in the prior year; the other will recognize *lifetime* achievement in the field. The university will be implementing the awards program during the coming academic

year. There will be a celebration where award recipients will be recognized, and each recipient will be presented with a cash award.

Advisory Councils

Successful regional stewardship is dependent upon honest and frequent inputs from regional leaders. NKU has a long history of relying on Advisory Councils for its academic programs and for its centers and institutes. Currently, the university has 43 Advisory Councils. [See Appendix K for a list of university programs with Advisory Councils.] In addition, last spring the Provost asked the Deans to carefully review which of their college's programs do and do not have Advisory Councils and to either justify why some programs do not need an Advisory Council or add an Advisory Council where it is needed but non-existent.

The alignment examples presented here document NKU's strong commitment to aligning for regional stewardship. And while many more examples could be presented, the ones just described are among the more significant ones that make NKU a national leader in regional stewardship.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

NKU operates many units whose mission focuses directly on regional stewardship. A listing of positions within these units provides clear evidence of the university's existing infrastructure support. [See Appendix G for a statement of the mission and staffing of the units dedicated to outreach and public engagement.]

In addition to the specialized units listed in Appendix G, every academic department – though not every individual within a department – is expected to be involved in outreach and public engagement. It is part of their mission, and faculty frequently have reassigned time for this work. NKU's annual survey of outreach and public engagement for 2005 (completed in spring 2006) showed that faculty and director-level staff served on 450 boards, committees, and commissions related to their disciplines or their role at the university, and participated in 646 initiatives with the community (excluding service learning, student internships, and similar student-focused programs). The infrastructure supporting this work is provided by the academic departments and colleges, by offices within student affairs and academic affairs, and by the university's various centers and institutes.

Two on-going programs that provide infrastructure support deserve special mention. One is the University Community Partnership grant program. Each fall the university issues an RFP soliciting partnership projects involving NKU faculty with community organizations or agencies to address a community issue or challenge. A panel of faculty, administrators, and community members evaluate the proposals that are submitted and make recommendations for funding. Budgets for individual projects range from \$25,000 to \$75,000 and the overall budget each year is \$200,000. Examples of projects funded under this program include:

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- *Building Educational Success for Foster Care Youth*, a partnership with the Children's Law Center, The Point One-by-One Advocacy, and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services;
- *Library Link: Bettering Life In, Life Out*, a partnership with the Kenton County Detention Center;
- *Expanded Women's Health Care Initiative*, a partnership with Transitions, Inc., Welcome House, and the Women's Crisis Center; and
- *Updating Community Education Programs about Mental Disorders*, a partnership with the Mental Health Association of Northern Kentucky.

Another program provides a fund of \$25,000 to support taking the arts to the six rural counties in NKU's service region. For example, during spring semester of 2006, full-day programs were held in two counties and served 430 students. In addition, there were nine performances serving nearly 3,000 students and community members.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS: STATUS REPORT

Guidelines issued by CPE provide a roadmap for the tasks that are to be accomplished in the first phase of the regional stewardship initiative: infrastructure development. Because NKU has been strongly committed to regional stewardship for many years and because the region just completed its own visioning process, the university and community are involved in on-going work related to, or have already completed, each element of the roadmap. Table 1 provides a status report.

Table 1. Status Report on Infrastructure Development

Roadmap Elements	Comment	Status
Develop a plan for aligning institutional priorities, resources, and infrastructure to support stewardship initiative.	This element is precisely what SHAPE (see above) focused on: aligning the university for public engagement.	Completed
Modify organizational structure, institutional practices, and reward systems to support stewardship activities by faculty and staff.	The reward system expressed through the reappointment, promotion and tenure (RPT) process was aligned last spring. The work of SHAPE has identified other areas where alignment needs to be strengthened, and the university is implementing the roadmap established by SHAPE.	On-going
Identify key indicators of regional economic vitality, quality of life, and civic participation and configure information systems to collect and track these data.	This work was begun through <i>Making Place Matter</i> and was continued and completed through Vision 2015.	Completed

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Roadmap Elements	Comment	Status
Engage in environmental scanning activities, convene advisory committee meetings, and host public forums to identify regional or state needs, opportunities, and stewardship priorities.	All of these elements were incorporated in the year-long Vision 2015 process.	Completed
Produce a planning document that highlights regional needs, opportunities, and priorities and recommends strategies for addressing needs or taking advantage of opportunities.	The final report issued for Vision 2015 produced the document that will guide the university's regional stewardship over the next 10 years.	Completed
Increase awareness among advisory committee members, the campus community, and regional stakeholders of university resources and how those resources can be directed to address identified needs or take advantage of identified opportunities.	Awareness was increased through both the <i>Making Place Matter</i> and Vision 2015 processes. However, this is an on-going process that will continue indefinitely, rather than a single activity with a clear start and end date.	On-going
Establish partnerships with local and regional governments, P-12 schools, community and civic organizations, businesses, hospitals, foundations, and philanthropic organizations to garner financial or in-kind support for stewardship activities and increase program impact.	Given NKU's extensive involvement with the community, there are clearly a large number of partnerships that can garner support for the university's regional stewardship work. Existing partnerships are already doing so. For example, the partnering agency on a university-community partnership grant is required to contribute either cash or in-kind support for the project. As other examples, the university has agreements for support from Fifth Third Bank and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation and is discussing an important partnership with United Way. The university has also partnered with private foundations, such as the Rosenthal Foundation and the Mayerson Foundation, in support of outreach and public engagement. Establishing new partnerships and nurturing existing ones will continue indefinitely.	On-going

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Roadmap Elements	Comment	Status
Encourage faculty members to generate proposals and engage in stewardship activities that promote regional or statewide economic development livable communities, social inclusion, creative governance, and civic participation.	Colleges and departments are expected to reflect regional stewardship in their missions. Individual faculty are expected to address how they contribute to their unit's mission. Internal communication from all levels of the administration repeatedly reflect the importance of regional stewardship. The fact that the faculty and staff are involved in nearly 650 initiatives that benefit the community and serve on 450 boards, committees, and commissions demonstrates that the message is being clearly heard. It is a message that will be reiterated as we move forward.	On-going
Identify key indicators related to the nature and extent of institution/community interactions and configure information systems to collect and track these data.	For the past 4 years, the university has conducted an annual survey of faculty and staff outreach and public engagement. NKU was among the first in the nation to collect these data, and the university is continually improving the survey questions and methodology. With 4 years of experience, the university is now ready to develop a free-standing multi-purposed data collection procedure.	On-going
Provide professional development for faculty in engagement related areas and find creative ways of integrating public engagement into teaching and research activities at the institutions.	During the past academic year, the university hosted two events with external speakers focused on regional stewardship. Bill Plater, IUPUI, spoke on January 18; Eugene Rice was the featured speaker on February 17. In addition, throughout the year, the university's <i>Professional and Organizational Development</i> unit (formerly called the <i>Faculty Development Center</i>) provided workshops and seminars on engaged teaching, engaged scholarship, and engaged service. Faculty development is an on-going activity.	On-going